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PRESS RELEASE

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, announced today that Benjamin James Johnson, 27 of Alexandria, Virginia, pled guilty to a charge of smuggling before U.S. District Judge Claude M. Hilton. Johnson, scheduled to be sentenced on August 29, 2003, faces a maximum sentence of 5 years imprisonment and up to \$250,000 in fines.

On April 17, 2003, Benjamin James Johnson, a former satellite technician for Fox News, arrived at Dulles International Airport upon returning from his Fox News assignment covering the Iraqi War. Johnson's luggage contained twelve canvas paintings many of which were taken from "The New Presidential Palace," the former residence of Uday Hussein, one of Saddam Hussein's sons. Johnson's luggage also contained an American Embassy-Kuwait visitor badge, two chemical agent protective suits, one gas mask, and several Iraqi monetary bonds. Johnson failed to declare any of these items on the Customs declaration form he submitted to the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection.

The case was investigated the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Department of Homeland Security, and prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Dennis M. Kennedy.

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